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# State Formation, Habitus, and National Character: Elias, Bourdieu, Polanyi, and Gellner and the Case of Asylum Seekers in Ireland

*Steven Loyal and Stephen Quilley\**

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**Abstract:** »Staatsbildung, Habitus und nationaler Charakter: Elias, Bourdieu, Polanyi und Gellner sowie der Fall von Asylsuchenden in Irland«. Synthesizing material derived from Norbert Elias, Pierre Bourdieu, Karl Polanyi, Max Weber, Benedict Anderson and Ernest Gellner, in Part I the concept of "national character" is delineated as a special case of "habitus" relating to the socio-spatial scale of the nation state. In relation to problems of state-formation, national character is shown to be a figurational and co-developmental function of the system of nation-states in which patterns of mutual identification and "imagined community" involve both the coercive codification and internalization of particular national narratives and origin myths which define "people like us" in terms of a symbolic family; and also, in relation to competing nation-states, the projection and internalization of national group charisma and shame. In Part II, these ideas are applied to the pattern of state formation in Ireland and the recent history of the reception, cultural accommodation, and treatment of asylum seekers.

**Keywords:** Norbert Elias, Pierre Bourdieu, Ernest Gellner, state formation, habitus, imagined community, asylum seekers.

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## 1. Introduction

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The concept of "national character" remains a recurring trope of popular culture. As Anderson notes, the concept has "fallen into intellectual disgrace" since it can easily slide into caricatured prejudices and stereotypes, yet he adds: "there are no generalizations that seem in principle so indefensible, yet in practice so unavoidable" (Anderson 1992, 261). The first major writer to use the term systematically was Hume who attempted to show its changing nature in relation to political and economic circumstances: "each nation has a peculiar set of manners, and that some particular qualities are more frequently to be met

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with among one people than their neighbours” (Hume 1987 [1742], 197). Such analysis was later taken forward in the work of Durkheim’s colleague, Alfred Fouille, in his *Esquisse Psychologique des Peuples Europeens* in 1902, Ernest Barker’s *National Character* 1927, and the Austrian Marxist Otto Bauer, *The Question of Nationalities and Social Democracy* in 1924. He states:

let us provisionally define national character as the complex of physical and mental characteristics that distinguishes one nation from others; beyond this, all peoples have those common characteristics that we mutually acknowledge as human, while on the other, hand the particular classes, professions and individuals of each nation have individual properties, special characteristics, that distinguish them from one another. (Bauer 2012 [1924], 40)

Although difficult to operationalize as a basis for systematic comparative sociology or social-psychology without falling prey to highly involved stereotypes, the idea of national character nevertheless remains, to some degree, indispensable. In Part I of this essay, we synthesize overlapping ideas from a number of classic sociological accounts of state-formation, culture, and personality – to develop a theoretical account of national character as the particular inflexion in psychogenesis or habitus, such that modern individuals are to some significant degree “like *some* other people” – and where the “some” relates to citizens of a national territory, market, civic-legal domain, and language-culture. At the same time, they are like *all* other people qua common humanity; and *no* other people qua individuals (Murray and Kluckhohn 1948, 35 quoted in Mennell, 2017, 5). In this sense the “some” of national character is different to the “some” associated with other social groupings that also generate patterns of exclusive mutual identification and habitus – in relation to for instance, class, race, sexuality, lifestyle, psychological disposition, religion, ethnicity, age, etc. (see Figure 3).

In Part II we use these ideas to analyze the development of an Irish “national habitus.” Initially Catholic and rural – developing in response to a more powerful British colonial habitus – this “national character” altered as power balances shifted, especially after independence. In this new post-colonial context, immigration increasingly became the negative figurational foil.

In the process of state formation, the relation between the state and individuals has developed (a) as a function of *authority relations*, as with the rationalization of legal frameworks, the monopoly of violence and the extension of state regulation into family and community life; (b) as a function of the *survival unit*, as individuals became more dependent on the institutions of state and market and less on place-bound relations of family and community for economic and physical security; and (c) *culture and identity*, as mutual identification with the imagined community of nation became the dominant ideational habitus. Viewed over several centuries, it is argued that *social* inequality within Western states has declined and power balances between social groups have equalized. At the same time, increasing *economic* inequality between and within

states that has accompanied globalization and a policy environment dominated by neoliberalism and market retrenchment, represents a significant reversal of this long-term trajectory. Independently of the empirical situation, opinion polls show a consistent perception, among Europeans, that societies are becoming less and not more equal (Khondker 2011, 3). Capitalism has always been “instituted” by nation-states (Polanyi 1957b), but as some writers have argued, Western state democracies are “hollowing out” and becoming more directly dominated by corporate license and less able to sustain distinctive internal regulatory environments and societal regimes (Jessop 2004). As a small open dependent economy, Ireland has become one of the most free-market, globalized economies in the world (Kearney 2004; KOF 2016). The implications of this understanding are explored for the post-war, Fordist state-society compact particularly viz-à-viz the arrival of increasing numbers of asylum seekers from the 1980s onwards. It is argued that the rise of populist and far-right parties and discourses across Europe is an indication of an intensifying scramble for resources and reassertion of ethno-national status differentials by survival groups. In this light, social closure strategies are presented as an aspect of established-outsider relations and ongoing attempts by different groups to secure not only economic and material resources such as private property, labour market access, and welfare, but also social esteem and status distinctions in Ireland and elsewhere. Finally, it is argued that the arrival of asylum seekers and immigrants generally, and in Ireland in particular, has generated a number of structural contradictions or entrenched wicked dilemmas (i.e., paradoxical and irreconcilable tensions between two or more cherished but irreconcilable priorities). Moreover, the state itself expresses these contradictions as a multi-layered, multi-dimensional “entity in process,” a field of contradictory forces enshrined in various state departments with sometimes coherent, sometimes contradictory agendas concerning the distribution of economic resources, rights, opportunities, and recognition.

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## 2. Part I: Theories of National Character and Habitus in Relation to State Formation

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### 2.1 Culture and Personality

As Mennell (2017) points out, the idea of national character is as old as nation-states and nationalism, with derogatory name calling – *les rosbifs*, frogs, krauts, Napoleon’s “nation of shopkeepers” – a fixture of street-level international relations. But as Mennell argues echoing Klineberg (1950), neither De Tocqueville’s comparison of the democratic spirit of America with the aristocratic structure of feeling in France nor subsequent studies associated with the “culture and personality” school in Anthropology (Benedict 1946; Gorer 1949;

Mack and Gorer 1955; Mead 2001, 2002) established a robust framework systematic comparative research. And yet as both Mennell and Elias (2008 [1960], 230-1 quoted in Mennell)) concede, the idea of national character will not go away, remaining an intuitive and seemingly useful means of orientation in a world of nation-states and citizens.

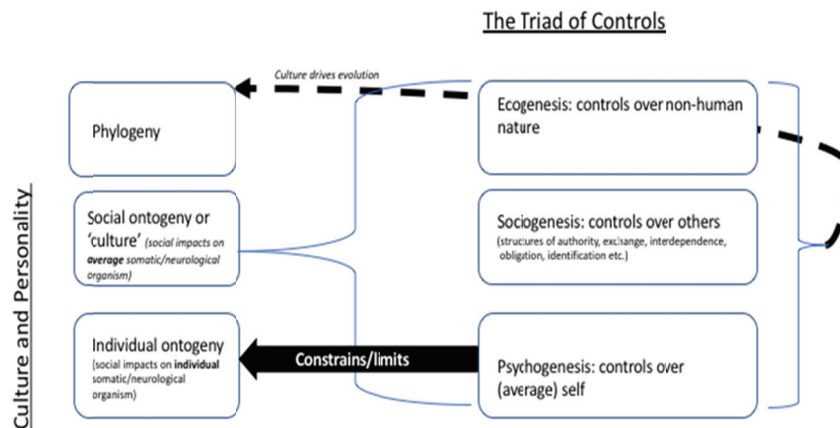
Somewhat prosaically, anthropologists Kluckhohn and Murray pointed out in *Personality in Nature, Society and Culture* (1948, 35) that every person is in certain respects (a) like *all* other people, (b) like *some* other people, and (c) like *no* other person. This tripartite category corresponds to the domains of:

- a) *biological phylogeny* – evolved human nature;
- b) *social ontogeny* or long-term processes of social development or the automaticity of what Elias calls “second nature” (i.e., the patterning effect of societally-specific social processes on the neuro-psychological structure of the brain); and
- c) *individual ontogeny* or the growth and development of individual psychology and personality (see Quilley 2004).

### 3. National Character as Habitus: Elias and Bourdieu

In human beings, culture and language engender a dimension of growth and development between phylogeny and ontogeny that is social/group-specific dimensions of ontogeny, barely if at all present in other animals. The distinctively human domain of social ontogeny generates the arena in which what Elias (1978) refers to as the “triad of controls,” play out.

**Figure 1:** Culture, Personality and the Triad of Controls



For Elias (1978), during the long-term process of human development, three sets of controls – ecological controls over non-human nature, social controls over others and psychological controls over self – develop in tandem. In *On the Process of Civilization*, Elias explored a particular phase in the European civilizing process in which the sociogenesis of patterns of exchange, interdependency between individuals and groups, socio-legal regulation and political authority engendered the identifiable processes of psychogenesis associated with individualization and the emergence of the novel structure of personality that is intimated by concepts such as homo economicus (or what Elias calls *Homo clausus* – 2010), the thinking subject of Cartesian philosophy, the autonomous moral agent of post-reformation Christianity, and the sovereign citizen of democratic and liberal theory.

An important aspect of this process relates to what Elias (2010) calls the I/We balance. The disembedding of a more spatially and socially mobile individual from the ascriptive and place-bound patterns of life characteristic of traditional agrarian societies, saw a marked shift towards the “I” – a process that Weber and subsequent commentators described as individualization. This aspect of modernity has dominated both the sociological and popular imaginations, associated with problems of anomie and subjective dislocation, alienation, disenchantment and rationalization (in Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Tonnies, etc.) and more recently narcissism (Lasch 1979; Twenge and Campbell 2010) a loss of meaning and ontological security (variously Laing 1962; Becker 1973; Giddens 1991), and the reflexive modernization associated with “risk society” (Giddens 1991; Beck 1992).

However, contrary to the *Homo clausus* imagery ingrained in both popular narratives of modernity and the methodological individualist methodology of social and economic science – the “we” does not disappear. Rather the changing I/We balance shifts the locus of the “we layer” (Elias 2013, 24) of mutual identification away from family, place, and community to higher level and more abstract forms of “imagined community” (Anderson 1992) associated with the nation-state but also in many cases with all sorts of other collectivities predicated on religion, ethnicity, and even sport and leisure. This does not imply that the other “we” levels disappear, only that they become submerged or interact in a further increasingly dominant modality of identification. Critically, in more complex societies it is such higher-level we-identities that cohere as “survival units” (Elias 2010). Thus, for instance, in a modern society the individual relies on the institutions of state and market for economic and physical security (e.g., social insurance, healthcare, police protection, income from employment, private insurance) much more than extended family or neighbours. So, the propensity for we/they or insider/outsider binaries is almost certainly an innate facet of the evolved architecture of human social relations, forged in the pattern of “fission and fusion” characteristic of both primates and

human band and tribal societies (Evans-Pritchard 1940; Aureli et al. 2008). But the scale and the particular manner in which this dynamic is expressed in human societies is very much a function of culturally defined conceptions of community and “survival unit” (Elias and Scotson 2008; Quilley 2009). Complex societies engender multiple dynamic interrelated “we” identifications. As Mennell argues “processes of habitus formation [...] are by no means confined to *national* groups and ‘*national* character’” (Mennell 2017, 5 emphasis in original). Nevertheless, the “imagined community” of nation (Anderson 1992) remains stubbornly persistent and for the majority in most national societies, perhaps the dominant locus for mutual identification. This is almost certainly because, as Mennell suggests (1994), the most significant we-identity usually coincides with what Elias refers to as the “survival unit,” i.e., the largest group upon which an individual depends in order to secure the material resources, physical security, and means of orientation necessary for survival (Elias 2010, 182-9; 195-207).

For Elias the concept of habitus is synonymous with “second nature,” which is to say all those patterns of behaviour, orienting and cognitive categories, structures of psychological restraint, and cultural taboos that a child absorbs as a function of socialization or enculturation in a particular society – patterns that are so deeply engrained the neurogenic and somatic “muscle memory” as to be autonomic and largely unconscious in their operation and effect and so taken for granted as to appear natural to the individuals involved. Equally for Bourdieu, drawing on Merleau-Ponty’s notion of bodily schema and motor intentionality, habitus is the structured dispositions functioning as structuring dispositions expressed in our social practices (Bourdieu 1977) again increasingly tied to state formation (2014).

Because survival units have, for the most part, increased in scale over the course of social development (as a function of the advancing triad of controls), from the 19th century the nation-state became an unavoidable and dominant form of social organization. For this reason, the national habitus has become the overarching concern for sociologists such as Norbert Elias and others pre-occupied with comparative modernization.

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#### 4. The Formation of Individuals, Markets, Nations, and States

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The *homo clausus* image of the modern personality is both accurate and, as Elias (2010) pointed out, misleading. Social psychological research has shown that the perception of autonomy and individual agency, even in modern liberal societies, greatly underplays the relational nature of the self- and the extent to which the self is evoked by social context and interaction with other selves. This was one of the key findings of George Herbert Mead (1937), and later

Erving Goffman (1959), and has been reinforced by Ross and Nisbet (1991) ground breaking study of the influence of situations and social context on individual decision making and cognition. But at the same time, the process of individualization described in detail by Weber and many subsequent sociologists (e.g., Beck 1992, ch. 5) has certainly transformed all aspects of social life. Modern society is first and foremost, as Elias put it, a society of individuals.

It is also critical to understand the relation between the process of individualization and, on the one hand, the great waxing of the two central institutions of modern society, namely the *market* and the *state*, and the waning of the domain of “livelihood” associated with *householding* (autarchy) and patterns of *reciprocity and gift exchange* on the other. In his ground-breaking study (1944; 1968), Karl Polanyi described the central dynamic during early-modern capitalism was the disembedding of “economic” activity as a distinct domain, identifiable and separate from the wider cultural, religious, social, and political institutions of society. Whilst forms of market exchange are a feature of all recorded human societies, it is only with the appearance of the self-regulating market economy “directed by market prices and nothing but market prices” (ibid., 45) that the process of provisioning and livelihood comes to be organized almost entirely around individual incentives for economic gain. It is only with such disembedded forms of economy that resources are able to flow freely with a view to maximizing such gains. Hitherto invisible and indivisible from other dimensions of culture and politics, the substantive matrices of group activity associated with the provisioning of communities become a separate, visible, and self-referential sphere, the domain of formal economics. With the emergence of the self-regulating market, “not blood tie, legal compulsion, religious obligation, fealty or magic [compel] participation in economic life, but specifically economic institutions such as private enterprise and the wage system” (Polanyi 1968, 81).

Drawing on the economic anthropology of Malinowski (1922), Firth (1951), Thurnwald (1935), and Mead (1937), Polanyi showed that in all previous agrarian, horticultural, and hunter-gathering societies, the economy does not exist as a visible, comprehensible, and separate domain “as such.” Individual activity associated with provisioning and livelihood was motivated primarily by the need to safeguard social standing and status, to fulfil ongoing patterns of (symmetrical) reciprocation or (asymmetrical) redistribution. The individual is a personalized rather than an “anonymous economic factor” (Firth 1951, 137). The integrating principles of *house-holding* (autarchy), *reciprocity* (symmetrical non-market exchange), *redistribution* (asymmetrical transfers between more and less powerful actors), and *market exchange* were combined and weighted, argued Polanyi (1968), in different ways in different societies. But in most cases, trade was highly regulated and genuine price-setting markets played a supplementary and marginal role.



The gradual disembedding of economic activity during the early modern period was associated principally with the creation of “fictitious commodities” in labour and land, fictitious because they were either not produced in the first place (land), or not produced for sale (labour). Even into the early modern period, there were binding customary and legal limitations on market transactions involving land and labour.

In England, the trauma occasioned by the enclosure movement, which gathered pace after the Civil War and peaked toward the turn of the 19th century, was a consequence of the wholesale removal of such limitations. With regard to land, this involved the stripping away of cross-cutting interdependencies, rights, and obligations of the commons, which ensured that usage did not coincide with legal tenure. Citing Bentham’s view that the prosperity of agriculture (read capitalist modernization) was facilitated to the extent that “there are no entails, no inalienable endowments, no common lands, no rights or redemptions, no tithes” (1944, 189), Polanyi suggested that this process of “disembedding” was deliberate and strategic in nature. With regard to labour, the combination of enclosure and “emancipation” removed the substantive moral right to subsistence attached to group membership.

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## 5. Individualism and the Fibre of Modern Institutions

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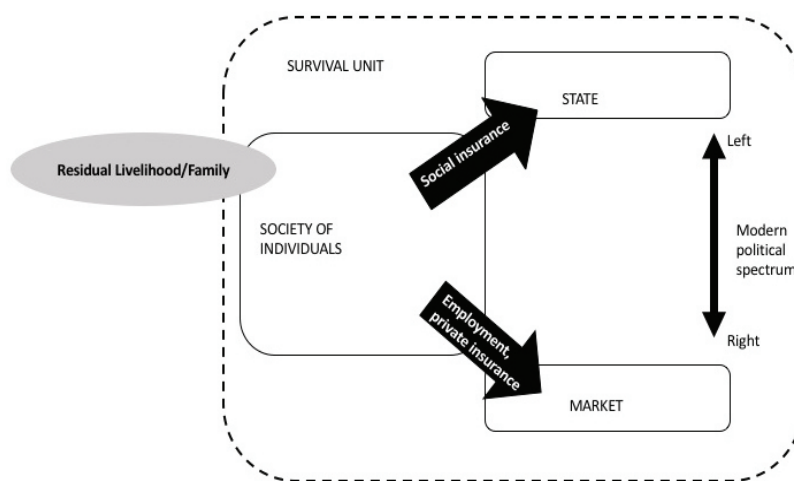
Polanyi (1944) argues that the project of liberal society was a utopian project which, because markets are so corrosive of social and natural capital, could never have been completed without completely destroying the social and ecological basis of society (the reproduction of labour and nature respectively). Nevertheless, it was certainly the case that through the process of capitalist modernization, European societies became progressively more like the ideal typical market society, with individuals ever more cut off from the traditional lattice of mutual aid and obligation (livelihood) and more dependent on the market. What he referred to as the “countervailing movement of societal protection” did not re-instate traditional survival units but rather consolidated a new matrix of market and state in which the spatially and socially mobile individual remained the principle unit (see Figures 2 and 3). In the century between 1850 and 1950, this market-state society was consolidated as the Keynesian welfare state and various incarnations of the mixed economy (Esping-Anderson 1990; Quilley 2012).

The “original sin,” then, of liberal societies is this violent process of disembedding of traditional forms of livelihood, the destruction of clan tribal and place-bound we-identities and forms of association that represent a challenge to the emerging nation state. Peasants migrating into the fast-growing cities became “free” to move, change occupations, enter into contractual arrangements, and sell and (less often) buy their own or others’ labour power. The emerging

society of individuals simultaneously became a necessary prerequisite and also an ideal-typical exemplar for a whole range of archetypically and mutually reinforcing, modern cultural and institutional forms in the domains of economy, law, democratic citizenship, philosophy, religion, and even medicine.

Through this ontological bricolage across innumerable cross-cutting fields, the individual as a unit of analysis, of cognition and as a principle of organization becomes so mutually reinforcing and pervasive as to appear “natural” and conform to what Elias referred to as our “second nature” or “habitus” – culturally acquired patterns of behaviour and cognition that are so deeply engrained as to become sufficiently automatic and pre-cognitive as to appear instinctive and an aspect of human nature (Elias 2012, 109, 117; Mennell and Linklater 2010, fn 74).

**Figure 2:** The National Society of Individuals as the Primary Survival Unit



But perception and empirical reality notwithstanding, this habitus, by definition, only emerges in the context of complex, individuated societies where there is (i.) sufficient population density and economic surplus being generated as to make possible the formation of a state – a repository of political and sometimes religious authority with power over individuals (Marx 1906; Skopol 1979; Barrington Moore 1966, Perelman 2000); (ii.) a society in which individuals experience such spatial, occupational, and social mobility as to be significantly detached from place-bound, kinship, and tribally rooted survival units; and (iii.) that mechanisms exist through either or both economy and state, to provide some kind of guarantee or social support outside of the traditional constellations of family/place.

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## 6. Monopoly and Social Closure

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Not only is nationality tied to sovereignty – control over a fixed, delimited territory – but both processes can also be connected to processes of monopolization and social closure. For Weber, the central criterion defining the modern nation-state was that it possessed a near monopoly over the legitimate means of violence (Weber 1978). Such a view was extended by Elias, who posits a monopoly of violence and *taxation* (Elias 2000); by Bourdieu, who pivots his definition of the state in terms of the monopoly of physical and *symbolic violence*; by Gellner, who emphasized the constitutive monopoly of *acculturation and exo-education* (1983); and by Torpey (1998, 2000), who highlights the monopoly of *movement* (Torpey 1998, 2000). Tied to this process of monopolization are processes of social closure (Weber 1978) or “established-outsider relations” (Elias and Scotson 2008) which take as their foundation power struggles.

For Weber, such processes of closure are tied to the formation of “status groups,” that is, “a plurality of persons who, within a larger group, successfully claim [...] a special social esteem” (Weber 1968, 306). Such stratification by status is inextricably linked to the monopolization of ideal or material goods or opportunities (Weber 1968, 935). They reflect the competition for social, political, and economic interests—economic and social esteem. Status groups divide collectivities into insiders and outsiders, members and non-members, in order to facilitate processes of monopolization and exclusion. As Weber argues, a variety of (racial, linguistic, religious, social, geographical) characteristics can be used as a pretext for exclusion – “whatever suggests itself most easily is seized upon.” Now, putting aside their own internal rivalries, “jointly acting competitors” form an “interest group” towards outsiders, and there is a strong tendency for the interests of this group to be rationalized and elaborated in law, administrative procedures, and so on (Weber 1968, 341f.).

Weber recognizes that status groups have often drawn on the state to provide support to maintain their domination and privilege. But in some ways it is useful to look upon the modern state itself as a large-scale status group:

as the organized dimension of a giant status group constituted by the entire citizenry. To the extent that this picture is appropriate, the citizens may then be considered as an excluding group acting collectively to monopolize the resources of a territory and the material and institutional infrastructures that arise upon it. (Barnes 1995, 146)

Even if this citizenry is large and riven with conflicts, internal instability, and divisions, and even though not all members will directly interact with one another, there may exist representatives – mobile individuals, politicians, community leaders, and so on – who are concerned with aligning the pattern of affective we-identification and cognition between groups.

Ethno-nationality and national belonging, along with ideas of sovereignty and citizenship, then can be understood as a form of status exclusivity enacted by status groups. Given this pattern of competing national survival units, we can understand attempts by states to prevent the entry of immigrants generally, and asylum seekers in particular, as not merely assertions of their right to control their borders, but also as part of the wider process of social closure and the monopolization of resources for specific members.

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## 7. Language, Culture, and Nation

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The nation-state and the society of individuals emerged in tandem. The process of disembedding and individuation synonymous with capitalist modernization have often been violent and necessarily coercive; but such processes seem to be a necessary and unavoidable prerequisite for functioning liberal democracies predicated on the idea of citizenship and some broader notion of human rights. Attempts to reverse this developmental sequence and use democracy and a culture of rights as a lever to promote market society and development have often proved spectacular failures – the most egregious examples being the forced democratization of Iraq and Afghanistan after Western military occupation. It is worth emphasising the coercive nature of the social and psychological processes involved in democratization. In *Nations and Nationalism* (1983), Gellner characterised the process in terms of cultural homogenization, where one of many competing potential language-cultures achieves dominance and is elevated to the status of a monopolistic “high culture.” A relatively homogeneous “national container” is necessary for institutions of democracy and market to operate effectively with one language, one set of laws, one set of weights and measures, standardized time, shared normative expectations, and patterns of etiquette. In order to effect this transformation, nation states typically replace local, contextual, informal, familial patterns of education and acculturation in which children learn “on the job,” with “exo-education,” i.e., standardized and rationalized patterns of education conducted by trained teachers in the context of formal schools and universities acting as agencies of the state (see also Bourdieu 2014). Variations of this pattern include British public schools (turning the sons of former local warrior leaders into a national officer class), progressive prison systems, military training regimes, universities, and tribal residential schools in places such as Canada, India, and Indonesia.

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## 8. Imagined Community, Legitimation, and the Dynamics of Group Charisma/Shame

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For the society of individuals to function effectively as a survival unit, the market has been supplemented by the institutions of the nation-state. The social compact established by western states and an increasing number of middle-income countries in the global south hinges on mechanisms of taxation and redistribution. It is necessary for such fiscal transfers to be perceived as normal, conventional, unremarkable, and legitimate rather than extortion and robbery. To the extent that this is the case, the state machinery can operate by consensus, with the monopoly of violence retreating into the background. Perhaps the most essential prerequisite for this is the construction of what Anderson famously referred to as an “imagined community” (1992). The nation has to become an abstract incarnation of family and community at a higher spatial scale – a form of family that can absorb new members into what is an exclusive, membership-based club. Citizenship functions as both an instrument and object of social closure (Brubaker 1992, 181). The architecture and paraphernalia of borders, passports, and national insurance numbers is all designed to consolidate this particular pattern of mutual identification and “we identity” (Torpey 2000; Elias 2010). Because the principal and defining feature of the nation-state is its claim to be a “spatially comprehensive” structure of authority and regulation, it can never be indifferent to movement across borders (Brubaker 1992, 25). The “invention of tradition” and defined national cultures from the continuous mingling blush of local and peasant ways of being function in the same way, primarily to construe citizenship as a quasi-familial structure of belonging and obligation (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Thompson 1991).

Clearly the dominance of this dyadic relation between the individual and the market/state does not eliminate group dynamics, patterns of mutual identification, or habitus formation at lower (or even higher) spatial scales. The precise relationship between national, class and ethnic, individual, and state processes and identifications remains contingent and open-ended (Hall 2017).

One corollary of this pattern turns on the innate human propensity for the binary construction of in-group and out-group identifications. Elias and Scotson’s (2008) study of established and outsider dynamics demonstrated the extent to which culture involves the exacting of narratives and psychological projection of both positive and negative values onto “we” and “they” groups, and the internalization of both group-charisma and group-shame among dominant and subaltern groups respectively. The critical thing is the unequal power ratio between these groups, which is itself determined by the way in which they are bonded together, their different degree of organization and cohesion, and the function one group or individual has for the other. Hence, when examining

the status and life chances of asylum seekers in terms of “established-outsider” relationships, power cannot be explained only in terms of the monopolization of physical resources by one group (Elias and Scotson 2008). Also important is the degree of organization, modes of orientation, internal cohesion, and social capital of the social groups concerned. But this relation is, as we shall argue, mediated by a national habitus instilled and regulated in the citizen population by the Irish state. Given the historical reality that (i.) particular nation-states emerge by definition within a system of competing/cooperating states and (ii.) that established/outsider dynamics are intrinsic to the exclusive category of citizenship (Loyal and Quilley 2017a; 2017b), it seems also that some or other versions of nationalism are an unavoidable concomitant of stable capitalist democracies. At the same time, this form of we-identification can be channelled along more or less ethno-nativist or civic lines, depending on the narrative basis of mutual identification and the resources available for different imaginings of shared origin and destiny.

The process of top-down state nationalization is, however, only half of the story. To take root, nationalizing mythologies, categories, concepts, and stories need to be translated and re-inscribed into everyday local traditions, practices, and ways of acting-seeing-feeling, to use Durkheim’s Kantian expression, by individuals and groups. Such nationalist sentiments and categories must simultaneously displace antecedent (e.g., tribal, place-bound, land-based) ways of seeing and organizing the world (Bourdieu 2014). In this sense, processes of migration into hitherto relatively homogenous national cultures can be seen as reintroducing disparate and often dissonant ways of acting-seeing-feeling that are not yet synched with the national culture. Nationalism is therefore not something that is on the periphery that emerges intermittently in passionate but episodic displays of flag waving, protest, or revolution. It is rather ever-present and ubiquitous in substance of, and context for, routine and trivial activities. Nationalism is, in this way, “banal” and deeply embedded in contemporary ways of thinking and this is central to its reproduction (Billig 1995, 6). As a primary mode of attachment, the nation provides the central orchestrating “we-identity” often mobilizing an extraordinary depth of emotions and feeling. It is the nation, constituted by individuals of formally equal worth, and conceived as an extended family, which both symbolically and practically constitutes a condition of possibility for social solidarity. This is not to deny the variability of subjective attachment or locus of identification which varies within populations, and according to different contexts (Gramsci 1973). Central to the arguments advanced here and enshrined in the idea of the nation and nation-state is the idea of sovereignty. By definition, democratic nation-states monopolize the process of government over a fixed territorial area, with the consent of the population. As sovereign organizational units, nation-states work most effectively with a unified, culturally homogenous citizenry. As polities, nation-states are involved in boundary construction on an ongoing basis. The relationship

between the state, domestic citizens, and migrants/asylum seekers is that of prospective members of an exclusive club.

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## 9. Part II: "State Power," National Character, and the Reception of Asylum Seekers in Ireland

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Having discussed these issues conceptually, we now attempt to look at them substantively. Though consonant with the comparative theoretical framework advanced above, state formation in Ireland has been characterized by a very specific and path-dependent trajectory. As elsewhere, the political sociology of migration and asylum in Ireland can be understood in terms of the interface between processes of state formation, the political economy of capitalist modernization, and the legitimating function of cultural identity.

The ideological/political conflict against British colonialism created another important historical factor in shaping the Irish national habitus: the level of pervasive and ongoing violence. Irish Catholics effectively lived under British Protestant rule and domination for centuries. Protestant privilege and domination led to frustration at the lack of political advancement and reform for Irish Catholics. This pattern of contained but unresolved grievance often resulted, over centuries, in both episodes of sporadic violence and periods of sustained conflict. The United Irishman's rebellion in 1798 alone saw the loss of between 30,000 – 100,000 lives. As Rafferty (2016, 24) notes: "At times violence in Ireland seemed endemic. It came in three forms: rural and ad hoc, intentional and directed against the landlords; politically inspired. Given that many were desperately poor there seemed little to lose in violent encounters with authority." Such violence became a normalised part of the Fenian politics, where the Irish Republican Brotherhood (1858-1924), a widely supported political movement, fought for independence from Britain. It also became accepted by the more revolutionary parts of the succeeding Sinn Féin movement which arose in 1905.

Elsewhere we have explored the pattern of Irish state formation in terms of four overlapping discursive and practical logics in which state formation and habitus structuration forms a central dimension (Loyal and Quilley 2017a; 2018).

- i. The logic of capital accumulation: the mutual dependency between the state, more or less regulated markets, and the profitability of corporations.
- ii. The logic of ethnic/national identification, state formation, and state legitimization, which is reflected in the overarching concern to maintain sovereignty and control over the population through classificatory and law-making activities and the formation and reproduction of a national char-

acter – functions that Bourdieu refers to as the monopoly over symbolic violence.

- iii. The constitutional logic relating to enshrined liberal commitments and the rule of law.
- iv. The logic of civil society – that is, the social struggles of immigrants, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and (established and outsider) groups supporting and challenging immigration.

It is at the intersection of these four unfolding and shifting processes that we can understand the Irish state's relation to immigration generally and asylum seekers in particular as a contested process of national character reformation. In this discussion focused on the problem of national character, we will concentrate on the logics (ii.) and (iv.).

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## 10. Early Modern State Formation and Established-Outsider Relations

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From the early-modern period, the formation of state and society in Ireland was dominated by the wider politics of the British state. As a function of this wider impulse towards the nationalization of British society, the Irish economy was constructed increasingly as a source of agricultural produce and cheap labour – with millions migrating to the industrial cities of northern England. The monopolies of violence, taxation, symbolic framing, education, and acculturation as well as movement (see above) characteristic of state formation, were all elaborated in relation to the structural imperatives of the expanding British imperial state. Specifically, the symbolic framing and official imaginary focused on the narratives of Imperial expansion and competition with rival European powers and expressed the unconscious but unambiguous priorities of the Anglo-Norman aristocracy and the political and kinship links that tied Anglo-Irish landowners to the British establishment in London as well as provincial centres of power in Manchester, Glasgow, and Edinburgh. With regard to the imperative of homogenization and the imposition of a single high-culture, the institutions of “exo-education” (cf. Gellner) can be seen in development of English language schools, the exclusion of Gaelic, and the flow of upper- and middle-class children to public schools in Dublin and further afield in England. In this cultural configuration, the play of established-outsider relations was explicit in the racial/ethnicization of the Irish speaking peasantry as an “other” to be tamed and anglicized and never fully to be trusted – a sensibility very evident in the expression “beyond the pale.” In the period up to the famine, the cultural and state logic was in effect towards a version of the integration through industrialization and urbanization – exactly the pattern that was evident



with Irish peasants who ended up in the slums of places like Manchester's "Little Ireland" as described by Engels (1844).

As Gellner describes, this process of cultural homogenization is an intrinsic concomitant of state formation. In this sense, Irish Gaelic identity and culture was involved in an unequal competition with English as a potential locus for a national high-culture. This was a competition it could never win within the framework of an English dominated British nation state, and for much of the 18th and 19th century, Gaelic culture remained on the back foot driven into the geographical and cultural peripheries of the island. Nevertheless, the process of cultural elimination was never complete. Ireland retained a distinctive cultural identity that was manifest not only in the Gaelic language, but in distinctive local traditions of music and dance (Ó hAllmhuráin 2016), folklore, a rich and distinctly Irish literary tradition in the English language, very identifiable national and regional accents and grammatical idiosyncrasies, and a keen sense of a national history and destiny articulated very much against the dominant British framing narrative. With regard to those established-outsider dynamics, these features of the Irish psycho-cultural landscape in the 19th century effectively disrupted the integrity of the established caucus – because many in the political, religious, and cultural elites identified with aspects of this subaltern narrative and carried markers or traits of their mixed allegiances (for instance, an Irish accent). At the same time, they also inverted the logic of group charisma/shame – with characteristically Fenian/Anglo-protestant traits (from the perspective of Protestants) being re-framed as subaltern virtues or dominant/imperial vices. Thus, for instance, a projection of feckless and drunken irresponsibility was inverted as laid-back generosity of spirit and thrown back as uptight, humourlessness, etc.

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## 11. Modern Irish Nationalism

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In the 19th century, Irish republican nationalism sought to align the aspirations and identity of middle-class Protestants with the Catholic majority, under the umbrella of the United Irishmen. Subsequently, nationalism took on a more ethno-political patina representing a white Celtic/ Gaelic, rural, and Catholic "folk" – a "race" defined in opposition to an urban, Anglo-Irish constituency that was construed as part of the British colonial project. This shift was driven in part by the independence movement led by Daniel O'Connell and underpinned by a national-cultural frame elaborated by the protestant nationalist, Thomas Davis. Although sectarian with regard to religion, O'Connell's nationalism was highly progressive in terms of social class – an egalitarianism manifested also in strong support for the anti-slavery movement. From the 1860s onwards, four major socio-economic ruptures transformed the context for nationalist discourse.

- i. An agricultural and economic revolution entailing a shift to small- and middle-sized farming.
- ii. The rise of mass education in the 1860s.
- iii. A devotional movement led by the Catholic Church.
- iv. An escalation in political mobilization and calls for independence led by Charles Stewart Parnell (Garvin 2006).

Partition made it inevitable that Republican nationalism, in concert with the Church, continued to employ British colonialism, the monarchy, and Protestantism as a negative frame of reference. Similarly, the version of nationhood epitomized by De Valera's vision of national self-sufficiency and nativist cultural integrity during and after the Second World War was very different to the cosmopolitan civic nationalism that emerged with the Celtic Tiger in the 1990s and its embrace of global capitalism. Since the 19th century, Irish culture has had a double aspect corresponding to a parallel socio-economic development. On the one hand, a small country with comparatively well-developed mass communications and national newspapers served by effective and compulsory educational institutions engendering high literacy rates and represented by a cohesive and metropolitan intellectual and business elite; on the other, a predominantly rural, religious, agricultural economy and provincial sensibilities. Drawing on Celtic mythology, elite political and cultural entrepreneurs, such as Yeats, elaborated a literary nationalism directed towards the professional middle class. Their efforts were matched by a no-less vigorous political republicanism, which prioritized a strategy of Gaelicization, advanced principally through Gaelic games and sports from below (Cronin 1999). This much more overtly anti-British discourse became increasingly institutionalized under De Valera, providing a cultural rationale for the more insular, protectionist, and rural-focused economic policy. It was also codified in Irish law – for example, the Aliens and Citizenship Acts of 1935, as well in the Irish Constitution of 1937. At the same time, the idea of an atavistic economic and political nationalism giving way with greater integration into the global economy and political structures of the EU, to a more cosmopolitan and civic nationalism is rather simplistic (Malesevic 2014a). Rather, as elsewhere in Europe, both people and institutions remain “deeply committed to ideas and practices of nationhood” (Malesevic 2014a, 19). Since the 1950s, the administrative capacities and infrastructural reach of the Irish State have expanded greatly. There has been a normalization of state institutions, and of the identity of Ireland as a legitimate and equal partner in the wider community of nation-states. As a result of this, more banal and perhaps comfortable forms of nationalism (Billig 1995) have begun to hold sway over more passionate and sectarian discourses defined through conflict with Britain. Institutions such as the state schools, the national television network Raidió Teilifís Éireann (RTE), print media, and universities facilitate the reproduction of highly coherent form of civic nationalism which both celebrates the origin myths of the independence movement, whilst com-

binning this with a modern European identity that focuses more on culture than ethno-racial identity. Instances of nation-centric images and practices are “normalized, naturalised, routinized and taken for granted” (Malesevic 2014b, 20). They are also reproduced in media discussions of asylum seekers, immigrants, and citizenship.

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## 12. The Irish State and International Relations

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The history of the Irish State and its articulation with nationalism and national character is, however, also bound up inextricably with its foreign policy and relationship with the wider system of nation-states, initially in the struggle for independence, self-determination, and sovereignty, and subsequently with regard to the tension between the goal of economic autonomy and the need for growth. Given relations of interdependence, not even the most powerful states can pursue foreign policies irrespective of the interests and actions of other countries. Ireland’s foreign policy developed initially in relation to a pattern of conflict and cooperation with Britain. As Ronan Fanning (2000, 311) argues, the history of Irish foreign policy may be understood as consisting of three linked phases: (1) independence and assertion of political and economic autonomy; (2) the consolidation of the polity; and (3) the move from national isolationism (a preoccupation with independence) to a more global and cosmopolitan stance (the recognition of interdependence).

When the State was finally admitted to the UN in 1955, it was almost immediately drawn into the fold of the Western anti-communist coalition. Thus, the need for international recognition and prestige (Collins 1986), a strategy of peace and security, and the economic interests of a small state all combined to drive Ireland into increasingly global institutions. The irony was that although Ireland moved in this direction, primarily with a view to underpinning political and economic prestige and sovereignty, it was these same institutions, and particularly the UN, that drew Ireland reluctantly into a human rights agenda and policy. Initially, the State signed up to this agenda, with very little sense that it would present any kind of challenge to its sovereignty and or its right to structure and regulate its population given its protracted history of emigration.

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## 13. Economic Development and National Identity

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Since the early 19th century, the development of both the economy and policy was always linked to the broader project of national self-determination and sovereignty. Over time an ideology of industrialization had become a legitimating narrative and rationale, underpinning national independence. However, real progress was limited (O’Hearn 2002, 105).

Thus, when political independence was finally achieved after the First World War, the Irish Free State inherited an economy misshapen by centuries' colonial constraint, blighted by wide-scale poverty, dominated by the deadweight of impoverished agrarian regions, and marked by a legacy of industrial underdevelopment. In order to achieve independent, autonomous economic development, the Free State followed the path of import substitution industrialization (ISI). But given its developmental impediments and limited natural resources, the predominant focus was on agricultural production, which with Britain account for 92% of Irish exports (Allen 2016, 14).

In the 1930s under De Valera, protectionist policies, including blanket prohibitions on foreign investment resulted in a six-year trade war with Britain resolved only in 1938 with the Anglo-Irish Trade Agreement. This protectionist ethos resonated with Irish Catholicism and the strain of romantic traditionalism. Nevertheless, Britain remained Ireland's largest trade partner by an overwhelming margin. With the punt tied to sterling, room for manoeuvre was limited (O'Hearn 2002, 114).

Following the Second World War, American influence exercised through the Marshall plan saw discretionary funding tied to trade liberalization. During the 1950s, Ireland moved gradually towards a more export-oriented economic strategy, establishing government agencies such as the Industrial Development Authority (IDA), the Export Board (EB), and the Industrial Grants Board, whose remit was to reduce dependence on Britain, boost manufacturing exports and attract (mainly American) inward investment (O'Hearn 2002; Allen 2016). Over many decades the consistent thrust of Irish policy was to move away from protectionism and aspirations of autonomy and to embrace foreign-led and dependent patterns of development, or what O'Hearn called "postcolonial reincorporation and re-peripheralisation, under US influence" (2002, 113). As prohibitions on foreign investment were dismantled, so the State also joined a series of international institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank (1957) and later the European Economic Community (EEC) (1973). This strategy of providing a heavily incentivized export platform for global corporations continued into the 1980s. The result was an economy increasingly bifurcated between large corporate facilities with large workforces producing for export and a domestic manufacturing sector dominated by much smaller family firms. Immigration remained rare, with emigration the norm until the late 1980s.

### 13.1 The Celtic Tiger

From the 1990s, Ireland experiences an unprecedented economic boom. The central precipitating factor was undoubtedly the influx of American corporations in the 1990s, all seeking a platform for entry to the expanding EU (O'Hearn 2003, 34-55). With aggressive cuts in corporation tax (at 12% this was one-quarter the rate of many countries in the EU), generous grants, very

light touch regulation, weak trade unions, and an educated English-speaking workforce, Ireland was well placed to ride the wave. The expanding manufacturing sector (principally in computers and IT, pharmaceuticals, soft drinks, and engineering) brought a new pattern of organizational culture and “flexible specialization” production methods, and such foreign direct investment (FDI) accounted for nearly half of industrial profits and GDP growth during the 1990s (O’Hearn 2003; O’Riain 2004). By the end of the 1990s, Ireland had the fastest growing developed economy, the best job-creation record in the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), doubling its industrial workforce in just over a decade, and dramatically reducing structural unemployment (O’Riain and Murray 2007, 248-64). This labour market success continued with the labour force growing by 17% between 2001 and 2006 (FAS 2007, 10). From the late 1990s onwards, much of this growth was in domestic manufacturing and services, underpinned by a construction boom. By 2008, finance accounted for 14% of the workforce (Allen 2009, 40). But 2008 also saw the collapse of the economy and the beginnings of a deep recession. We see a picture then of a stagnant economy developing dramatically from the 1990s with an accelerated boom, falling back into an acute slump.

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#### 14. The Irish State’s Historical Reaction to Asylum Seekers

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We can now briefly examine the state’s treatment of immigration in a historical context by focusing on its treatment of Jewish refugees and the process of social closure aimed towards them. What we wish to demonstrate is the high degree of continuity and tradition characterizing the state’s stance towards immigration – representing a dialectic of continuity within discontinuity. The first piece of immigration legislation enacted by the state after independence was the Aliens Act of 1935 which drew heavily on the Aliens Restriction Act of 1914. As well as the Nationality and Citizenship Act (1935), this same year saw the President of the Free State draft the Constitution Amendment Bill. Writing at the time, De Valera commented that this legislative package “might together be regarded as comprising our whole nationality code” (De Valera, 14 February 1935, Dail Debates). It is in this sense that these pieces of legislation, especially the Aliens and Citizenship Acts, constitute an integrated whole and need to be understood in relation to one another. As well as an instrumental-rational response to the particular problems of immigration control, these acts can be seen as performative discourses whose purpose was also to shape a specific Irish national consciousness, or “national code” conceived, at least initially, primarily in opposition to Britishness. These acts constitute formal aspects of developing a national character. In some ways they can be read in the same way as Corrigan and Sayer (1985) conceive the establishment of Britishness, as an ongoing activity. The collective representations, ways in

which individuals are represented to themselves and the parameters through which they can identify, are simultaneously descriptive and moral:

The repertoire of activities and institutions usually defined as “the State” are cultural forms central to bourgeois civilization: states, if the pun be forgiven, state [...] They define, in great detail, acceptable forms and images of social activity and individual and collective identity; they regulate, in empirically specifiable ways, much – very much, by the twentieth century – of social life. Indeed, in this sense “the state” never stops talking [...] Out of the vast range of human social capacities – possible ways in which social life could be lived-state activities more or less forcibly “encourage” some while suppressing, marginalizing, eroding, undermining others. Schooling for instance comes to stand for education, policing for order, voting for political participation. Fundamental social classifications, like age and gender, are enshrined in law, embedded in institutions, routinized in administrative procedures and symbolized in rituals of state. Certain forms of activity are given the seal of approval, others are situated beyond the pale. This has cumulative, and enormous, cultural consequences; consequences for how people identify (in many cases, have to identify) themselves and their “place” in the world. (Corrigan and Sayer 1985, 3f.)

The collective conscience the state regulates is always that of a dominant class, gender, and ethnicity idealising its conditions of rule as rules of individual conduct. Nationality, in turn, allows a categorisation of outsiders and others: “The state is not only external and objective but, internal and subjective”: “it works through us. It works above all through the myriad ways it collectively and individually (mis) represents us and variously “encourages,” cajoles and in the final analysis forces us to (mis) represent ourselves. Over the centuries the compass of this regulation has ever widened, and such regulation is (partly) constitutive of ‘available’ modes of being human” (1985, 180). In addition, they argue that making this conscience collective is always an accomplishment, a struggle against other moralities and other ways of seeing, which express “the historical experiences of the dominated” and because “society is not factually a unity these can never be fully erased” (1985, 85).

Taken together, the provisions contained in this legislation demonstrated three criteria that have continued to shape immigration policy to this day: (1) an economic concern with the relative “costs and benefits” of migrants (e.g., scarce labour market skills vs competition with indigenous workers; welfare outlays vs increased tax base); (2) problems relating to state security, law, and (social) order (e.g., criminality, political subversion, social deviance, and “good character”); and (3) concerns relating to social cohesion and ethno-cultural-racial and religious homogeneity (e.g., perceived compatibility with the indigenous population and the likelihood of integration).

We can see the operation of these criteria, for example, with regard to the Irish State’s reaction to Jewish refugees which has been well documented (Keogh 1998; Goldstone 2000).

As a rural, economically undeveloped and geographically isolated state, few aliens let alone refugees had in fact sought sanctuary. In Joyce's *Ulysses* a character remarks "Ireland, they say has the honour of being the only country which never persecuted the Jews" to which his interlocutor remarks "Because she never let them in." After Hitler's accession to power in 1933 and the passing of the Nuremberg Laws in 1935 which deprived Jews of employment and citizenship, making them stateless and often indigent numbers of Jews applying to Ireland began to increase. Pressure to accept refugees came principally from the Department of External Affairs, which was keen to increase Ireland's prestige and visibility in the international arena. Yet, such a stance was always ambiguous. When in 1936 the League of Nations attempted to establish the legal status of refugees coming from Germany, Ireland's permanent envoy was notified that the powers of the Aliens Act should not be qualified (Keogh 1998, 117). Writing to the DEA, the Departmental Secretary for the DoJ noted in passing that there should be no "additional obligations on the *Saorstát* in relation to such refugees" (Roche 1936). Hence in May 1937, Ireland refused to accept the League's draft convention on the status of German refugees. Both the Department of Justice and the Department of Industry and Commerce were also adamantly opposed to any liberalization. In addition to national security concerns – Jews were associated with communism – there were deep-seated anxieties relating to competition in the labour market. With regard to entry conditions, procedures were therefore overtly racialized. It was repeatedly stated that Ireland could make no commitment to accepting refugees due to its unemployment situation, increasing population pressure, agricultural base, and lack of resources and there "not enough land to satisfy the needs of our own people" (Official Report of Plenary Session of Evian Conference, July 1938, cited in Keogh 1998, 119).

Here, an implicit pact of solidarity between the modern nation-state and its national citizens concerning the distribution of limited collective goods in the context of economic stagnation is foregrounded in order to effect a process of closure.

In presenting Jewish immigration as a threat to the social and economic order, the Department of Justice revealed its state mindset:

In general, I think that the Jewish community in this country should not be increased by way of immigration [Although Ireland has no history of antisemitism; ...] there are anti-Jewish groups in the country which would only be too glad to [use labour market competition from Jewish migrants as] an excuse to start an anti-Jewish campaign [...] Existing Jewish community in this country would be well advised ... not to encourage Jewish immigration. (Ruttledge to Briscoe 1938 cited in Keogh 1998, 125)

With an increase in the numbers of displaced Jews in the wake of repression in Germany, the DoJ remained intransigent and continued its illiberal policy of exclusion. Aliens generally would not be allowed to enter the state unless they

brought some economic benefit. But because they were stateless and had had much of their wealth confiscated, it was unlikely that Jews would be temporary entrants. Perceived as politically suspect with regard to Communist sympathies, they were also deemed likely to be disruptive of the ethno-national order and likely to provoke anti-Semitic movements. The assumption was that “They do not assimilate with our own people but remain a sort of colony of a worldwide Jewish community. This makes them a potential irritant in the body politic and has [elsewhere] led to disastrous results” (Roche to Moynihan 1946). The Minister for Justice used these arguments to justify allowing entry to a mere 60 Jewish refugees for the period between 1933 and 1946, at a time when the genocidal war had displaced almost 66 million people (Keogh 1998, 192).

Certainly, such restrictions mirrored the restrictionary policies of many other nation-states in a context of global economic depression. In an age of increasing nationalism, especially before and after the First World War, most governments believed that the presence of minority groups caused ethnic tensions within the social and moral order of the nation-state, that is, they were an irritant to the imagined body politic. As Hobsbawm observed, in the context of “making the world safe from bolshevism [...] the basic principle of reordering the map was to create ethnic-linguistic nation states, according to the belief that nations had the right to self-determination” (Hobsbawm 1994, 31f.). The dark side of self-determination was precisely that groups that could not be made to fit into one of the nascent *volk-nations* were always in danger of becoming “denationalized.” It was in this context that racial ideologies became superimposed onto ethno-national ideologies.

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## 15. Asylum Seekers in Contemporary Ireland and Europe

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By the end of the Cold War, asylum seekers were no longer viewed as sympathetically nor used as ideological ballast to highlight the totalitarian nature of communist regimes in a Cold war context. Moreover, despite very different immigration policies, patterns of organizational incorporation, and traditions of citizenship and membership, all European states reacted negatively to the rising number of asylum claims (Marrus 1985; Geddes 2001). From the 1980s onwards, applications for asylum in Europe and North America increased more than nine-fold (Keely and Russell 1994), especially following the break-up of Bosnia. States responded by increasing restrictions and prioritizing deterrence measures – not least by breaking down the conceptual distinction between economic migrants and political refugees, and obscuring the latter with the powerful discursive binary of “bogus” versus “genuine” refugees. During the 1990s, most European states reacted to the growing flow of asylum seekers by seeking to contain them in their continent or region of origin, and/or to restrict their access into the West. Increasing hostility to these growing numbers during



the 1990s was matched by the anxiety-ridden ideological construction of asylum seekers as opportunistic, an unnecessary burden on the finite national resources, and a threat to the cultural and national homogeneity. This reaction echoed the earlier nationalist retrenchment of Western states with the rise of the Nazis during the 1930s – a decision sealed at the 1938 Evian Conference, when Western governments effectively abandoned Germany and Austria’s Jews, arguing that their countries were already “saturated” with Jewish refugees (Marrus 1985).

More specifically, the development of the asylum and immigration regime in Ireland can be explained by looking at the ways in which the interest and priorities of the State – embodied in various autonomous bureaucracies, interacted with four logics mentioned in the introduction. With regard to (1) the *logic of capital*, from the 1980s onwards, government policy increasingly emphasized open borders and capital mobility. A corollary of this was that labour market dynamism became both persistent preoccupations of the Celtic Tiger. At the same time, the *logic of ethnic/national identity, state formation, and state legitimation* (2) continued to be reflected in the overarching concern to maintain sovereignty and control through what Bourdieu refers to as the monopoly over symbolic violence (Bourdieu 2014; Loyal and Quilley 2017). Simultaneously, positioning itself as an open, cosmopolitan, liberal, and distinctively Gaelic culture, the policy of the Irish State resonated with (3) a *constitutional logic* relating to enshrined liberal commitments and the rule of law. This was evident in vocal support for 1951 UN Convention on refugees and later, for example, the high-profile role of Mary Robinson as President and then later (1997-2002) as UN High Commissioner. Finally, with regard to (4) the *logic of civil society*, the Irish State has not been the only actor. Asylum seekers themselves, NGOs, and status and class groups supporting, but also challenging, immigration have been influential in moulding both the political context and the development of policy.

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## 16. Ireland and Asylum Seekers since the 1990s: Conflicting Constructions of Identity and Character

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More recently, the flows of asylum seekers, refugees, and displaced persons have grown so rapidly as to constitute what has been deemed a “migration crisis.” In its Global Trends Report (2016), the UNHCR recorded a total of 65.6 million “forcibly displaced people,” including over 40 million “internally displaced,” 22.5 million refugees, and 2.3 million asylum seekers. These figures are the highest number on record. Of these, half the refugees come from just three countries: the Syrian Arab Republic (5.5 million), Afghanistan (2.5 million), and South Sudan (1.4 million). Syria also accounts for 12 million of the internally displaced. Over 80% of these refugees were hosted by developing

countries with the three largest hosts being Turkey, Pakistan, and Lebanon. On a per capita basis, Lebanon was the largest recipient with one in six people in the country now a refugee. The vast majority remained outside of Europe, the richest continent in the world. Nevertheless, the increasing numbers – 1.3 million applications in 2015 and 2016 (Eurostat 2017) – have had a profound effect, shaking to the core the Schengen vision of a united Europe with no internal borders. The previous peak in applications had been 672,000 in 1992, following the collapse of Yugoslavia. But significantly, these Balkan refugees were Europeans fleeing from an intra-regional crisis. Not surprisingly, the reception of relatively huge numbers coming from outside Europe has varied considerably. Some countries have accepted very large numbers: Germany took 722,400 in 2016 (60% of all applicants) which went up from 441,900 in 2015, the vast majority from Syria; Austria received 88,360 with about one third of these from Syria, constituting the second highest number when measured on a per capita basis; Italy followed with 123,000 applications (10.1% of all applications) largely from Nigeria, Pakistan, and Gambia. Within the EU-28, 1.1 million first-instance decisions were processed in 2016, of which 57% led to a positive outcome. The leading states for positive outcomes were Slovakia 84% and Malta (83%), while the lowest were in Greece, Ireland, Poland, and Hungary with over 75% rejection rates (European Asylum Office 2017, 222). In 2015, Ireland received 1,552 applications for asylum of which only 9.8% were granted a positive decision at first instance (ORAC 2016). At the same time, there was increasing pressure from Germany for EU states to share the burden and distribute applications more evenly, especially in respect of those arriving via Greece and Italy. Although the EU eventually collectively agreed to accept a fixed quota of 160,000 refugees arriving in Italy and Greece in September 2015, by the end of 2017 only about 28,000 had been redistributed across Europe, and Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic steadfastly refused to comply and accept any refugees. In this context, Ireland agreed to take 4,000 under the Irish Refugee Protection Programme of which only 1,200 had been accepted by the end of 2017. Such socio-political processes intersect with state processes of nationalization and economic processes tied to increasing inequality. They entail what Gramsci (1973) calls a “conjunctural” analysis. Viewed over several centuries, inequality within Western states has declined and power balances between social groups have equalized (Elias 2000). However, such processes of what Elias calls “functional democratization” need to be unpacked. If we see processes of functional democratization with reference to gender relations and age distinctions, they have been counterpoised by processes of functional de-democratization with regard to political and economic processes. Whether the increasing inequality between and within states that has accompanied globalization and a policy environment dominated by neo-liberalism and market retrenchment represents a significant reversal of this long-term trajectory is a contested issue (Therborn 2006; Piketty 2014). Ther-

born has argued that global inequality increased during the 19th century and first two-thirds of the 20th, until the economic growth of China with its huge population and a decline in the levels of poverty. Certainly, regardless of the empirical situation, opinion polls show a consistent perception, among Europeans, that societies are becoming less and not more equal (Khondker 2011, 3). Although capitalism has always been “instituted” by nation-states (Polanyi 1957b), some writers have argued that Western democracies are “hollowing out” and becoming more directly dominated by corporate license and less able to sustain distinctive internal regulatory environments and societal regimes (Jessop 2004). In *Ruling the Void*, Mair (2013, 1), for example, argues that “the age of party democracy has passed.” He continues, “although the parties themselves remain, they have become so disconnected from the wider society, and pursue a form of competition that is so lacking in meaning, that they no longer seem capable of sustaining democracy in its present form.” Others talk of the emergence of “post-democracy” (Crouch 2004) in which democratic institutions have been co-opted by a small elite group. If this is the case, we may argue that modern Western democracies over the last few decades are beginning to resemble “plutocracies,” as elite groups usurp greater material resources through processes of closure (Barnes 2015). This has had implications for the post-war, Fordist state-society compact, particularly, from the 1980s onwards, vis-à-vis the arrival of increasing numbers of asylum seekers. Such tensions were exacerbated by the worldwide economic downturn, a declining rate of profit, and, since 1973, an endemic crisis of profitability (Brenner 2002).

With overburdened welfare systems and the continuing legacy of the 2008 economic crisis, sovereign debt crisis, and the deep institutional crisis of the Eurozone, the flow of asylum seekers came at a time of ebbing confidence in the institutional and political project of the EU. As Anderson (2009) has rightly argued, the origins and impetus underpinning the EU as a supranational framework were for the most part related to the socio-economic priorities of various states, especially France and Germany, seeking national-economic advantage and prosperity tied to the pooling of resources rather than broader security or military concerns, which though of relevance, remained ancillary, as well as Monnet’s federalist vision and American patronage. In the context of globalization and neo-liberalism, these economic underpinnings, dislocated from democratic or electoral checks, have produced increasing economic inequality, political alienation, and social dislocation. In such a conjuncture, where the EU was increasingly bereft of legitimation, the migration crisis gave momentum to the growth of populist and far-right parties such as Jobbik in Hungary, United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) in the United Kingdom, the Front National in France, the Dutch Freedom Party, Danish People’s Party, the Swedish Democrats, and the Alternative für Deutschland and Pegida in Germany. Reflecting perhaps more acute historical anxieties about territorial integrity, Hun-

gary and Bulgaria reintroduced internal borders, built walls, and reinforced border security (Jones 2016). Hungary in 2016 was allowing just one asylum seeker per day from Serbia to cross into each of its two transit zones. The more recent rise of far-right parties and discourses across Europe is one indication of this scramble over resources and reassertion of ethno-national status differentials often dubbed “populism” through which groups distinguish between “the masses” and an out of touch “elite.” This extraordinary pan-European movement and trans-Atlantic containing a specific “discursive and stylistic repertoire” (Brubaker 2017, 357) in which individuals and states claim to act and speak on behalf of the “people” has been expressed in Brexit, the rise of Trump, and the emergence of the far-right and, to a lesser extent, left (for example Podemos in France, Syriza in Greece). It followed a decade of “Third way” politics enunciated most fully by Giddens (1996). This national-populist conjuncture is often predicated on a distinction between self and other based solely on narrow national terms, as states continue to articulate national character. However, in the current ideological conjuncture, a broader civilizational discourse, especially between a reactionary Islam against a Christianised secularism and liberalism, has emerged (Brubaker 2017). The latter promotes gay rights, democracy, separation of Church and state, freedom of speech, gender equality, etc. while the former is deemed to represent an Islamic, retrograde extremism. Such a binary “populist” civilizational discourse has been articulated both by politicians such as Pim Fortuyn but also political parties of the right who have surged in popularity such as French National Front, the Austrian Freedom Party, The Dutch Party for Freedom, Pegida/AfD in Germany, PiS – Party of Law and Justice in Poland, and 5 Star and Salvini’s League Party in Italy. Here, outsiders and external forces be it globalization, unfettered trade, the EU, or radical Islam, are construed as threatening a way of life and the security of ordinary people. What they partly express and articulate is renewed forms of social and citizenship closure aimed at securing greater material and ideal resources in the face of increasing economic globalization, including the movement of labour. Here, discourses of nationalism, articulated by the state, are rearticulating with ethno-racial forms of discrimination. As Miles notes in discussing the latter process in another context, such discrimination

facilitate[s] the ideological identification of certain social strata within the subordinate classes (which are defined as belonging and therefore as having a natural right of access to scarce rights and resources) with the institutions responsible for the organization of production and distribution of material resources and political rights (i.e. with capitalists and the institutions of local and national state). (Miles 1993, 102)

Equally, in his discussion of social closure Wimmer puts it thus:

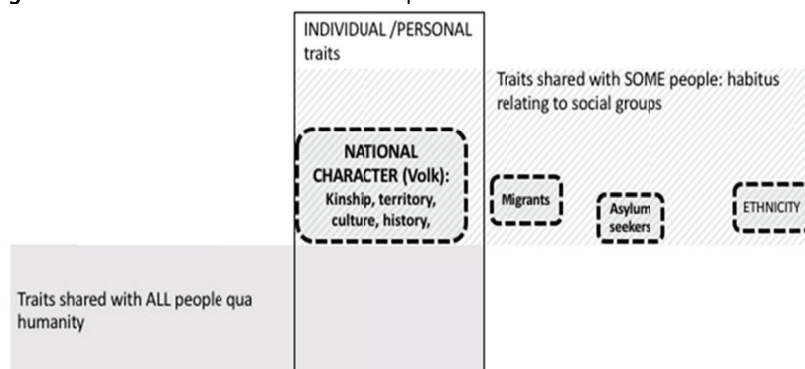
Periodically this institutional arrangement and the nationalistic self-image associated with it run into a crisis; the social compact breaks up, because the balance of forces between the different groups has changed in the course of economic and political developments [...] One of these projects consists of re-

vitalizing the national solidarity community, in insisting on the claim that the “legitimate owners” of the state and territory should have the right to a privileged seat in the theatre of society [...] the appeal to the national community aims at securing the future by safeguarding the rights and privileges of the indigenous who the state is supposed to protect. Whoever does not belong to the national majority such as an immigrant or a member of a religious or ethnic minority appears as an additional threat to the now precarious social union. (Wimmer 1997, 30)

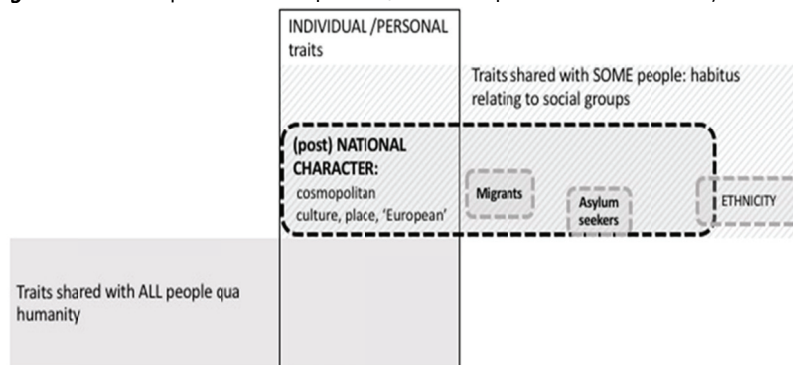
Ideological discourses centered on nationally orchestrated self-understandings underpinned by the nation-state here provide a practical frame through which to understand immigration and refugee movement. In a context of increasing globalisation of capital, economic dislocation, and scarcity of resources, they also form the basis for a process of social closure to reaffirm access to those resources and status distinction.

These processes are captured in Figure 3. With political independence, that element of the Irish habitus and those traits “shared with others” and understood as “national character,” came to coincide for the most part (at least in the South) unproblematically with the boundaries of territory, language, and culture (3a). With the process of European integration, market internationalization, and immigration, this genetic-mythological projection of community as a Celtic Volk has come under pressure. There has been a self-conscious attempt by progressives in concert with the left hand of the state, to project a more cosmopolitan, European, and inclusive understanding of Irish identity as cultural legacy that can be shared and acquired and is less connected with kinship and territory (3b).

**Figure 3a:** Irish National Character an Expression of Volk

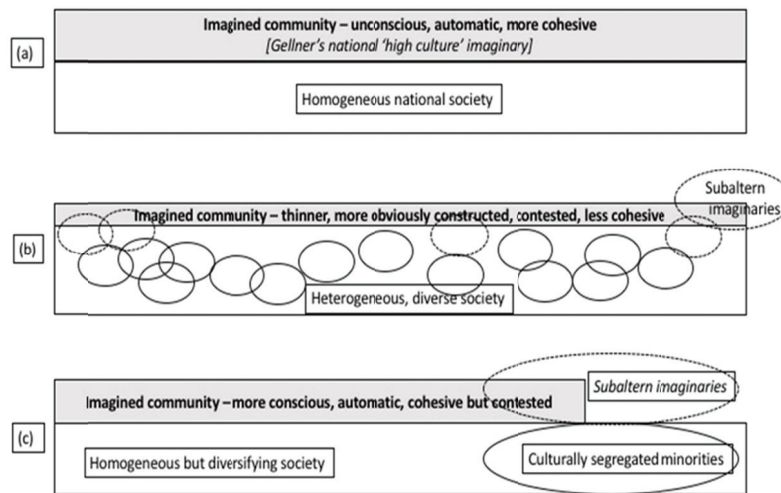


**Figure 3b:** A Prospective Cosmopolitan, Irish European National Identity



This process of adjustment in Ireland is comparable to similar processes in small, homogeneous European countries such as Sweden and the Netherlands. Nation-hood in such countries developed in ways highly congruent with Ernest Gellner’s account in *Nations and Nationalism* (1993). For Gellner, an unavoidable concomitant of the nationalization of culture was the coercive elevation of one among many contesting language cultures – to serve as a national “high culture” or lingua franca, mediating the process of institutional and market integration that is the sine qua non for the Nation-State (Figure 4a). Once achieved, this cultural homogenization is naturalised and veiled behind the necessary national mythology (Plato’s “Noble lie”). More recent processes of multi-cultural diversification present a profound difficulty for liberal democratic societies – precisely because they threaten to expose this necessary fiction and the “imagined” nature of community. The dominant multiculturalist narrative of countries like Ireland and Sweden makes light of the issue, presenting as a *fait accompli* diversity as an achieved and stable political-cultural landscape (Figure 4b). The reality increasingly exposed by populist reactions to “ever-closer union” all over Europe looks rather closer to Figure 4c, i.e., the progressive state struggles to integrate often culturally and spatially segregated language-cultures whilst presenting the stable diversity (4b) as both achieved and/or the reasonable and achievable object of policy. At the same time, faced with contesting imaginaries and identities of subaltern language-cultures – the danger is that the *volk-sensibility* that underpins the nation state becomes more self-conscious, less taken-for-granted, and in some contexts more defensive and aggressive in the policing of cultural and territorial boundaries (Figure 4c – see Steven Lukes introduction to Gellner 1998). This has yet to feature significantly in the Irish response to either Europe or immigration. However, it would be premature to discount the possibility.

**Figure 4:** Imagined Community and the Process of Diversification



Source: Gellner 1993 and Anderson 1992.

## 17. Conclusion

We have tried to demonstrate the development of Irish national character and its relationship to processes of exclusion against asylum seekers in Ireland. This has entailed a rather circuitous journey through processes of state formation, individualization, economic disembedding, established outsider relations, and social closure. We have attempted to show that the former presupposes an understanding of Ireland as simultaneously “a particular case of the possible” to use Husserl’s phrase, and yet demonstrating general sociological principles derived from a number of writers including Elias, Bourdieu, Polanyi, and Gellner. The tenor of most political/ideological commentary analyzing such morally laden processes is constructed not upon a realistic assessment of what might or might not be possible, but an emotional-affective commitment to an ideal typical construct of how the world “should be.” As Bourdieu notes “good intentions make for bad sociology” (Bourdieu 1990, 5). In this sense, we try to avoid a morally laden, mythically imbued binary between a “bad state” and “good asylum seekers.” Instead, our aim has been to try to understand these processes in terms of uneven power relations and the strategies which ensue and especially through the process of social, economic, territorial, and cultural closure which takes place in determinate, politically shifting historical conjunctures where resources and status distinctions are an object of struggle. Such established-outsider relations, we have argued, entailed struggles over

both material (economic) and ideal (status) processes: that is, processes of redistribution in terms of access to private property and credentials, strategies of recognition, and social distinction, which are often misleadingly separated (Fraser and Honneth 2004). Such struggles have taken place primarily through social closure and counter-usurpation strategies which themselves both express and reflect differences in power and degrees of social organization and established-outsider relations.

What our discussion between the state and asylum seekers has demonstrated is the existence of a number of structural contradictions. Such contradictions do not necessarily lead to a resolution at some higher level (Hegel's "*Aufgehoben*"). Instead, they point to the existence of various entrenched wicked dilemmas, that is, paradoxical and irreconcilable tensions between two or more cherished but irreconcilable structural priorities. Liberal nation-states are obliged to follow both human rights principles and popular sovereignty. There are irresolvable tensions between the freedom of movement and the right or necessity to restrict entry, and also between a "society of individuals" and ethno-national/racial and class group stratification and imaginaries. There are other intertwined wicked problems pitting liberal conservatives, liberals, and social democrats on the horns of a dilemma, not least: balancing the conflicting interests of present and future generations; the tension between exclusive membership criteria for citizenship and ethical obligations qua common humanity; the tension between the supranational EU and national state interests; the tension between *juris soli* and *juris sanguine*; the apparent incompatibility of the cosmopolitan outlook of educated and (usually wealthy) liberal universalists or the internationalism of socialists on the one hand, and the security and resource-focused imaginaries of hard-nosed hawks or downwardly mobile or disadvantaged groups on the other; and the tension between the need for free flows of capital to nurture an expanding and innovative economy and the place-bound imaginaries that legitimate the process of fiscal redistribution. Moreover, the state itself expresses these contradictions as a multi-layered, multidimensional "entity in process," a field of contradictory forces enshrined in various state departments with sometimes coherent, sometimes contradictory agendas concerning the distribution of economic resources, rights, opportunities, and recognition (Bourdieu 2014).

In Ireland, the looming Brexit negotiations and reworking of the Common Travel Area with Britain will have dramatic implications for the management of immigration, perhaps indicating change in the UK's understanding of immigration to a European one. But the European system faces its own dilemmas. In 2015, Sweden and Germany welcomed an unprecedented number of refugees. The state has not imploded. Their economies continue to thrive. But there has been a sharp rise in support for populist parties' (the Swedish Democrats [SD] and the Alternative für Deutschland [AfD]) advancing programmes aimed squarely at the constituencies of the traditional left and particularly in the case



of the SD (as with the Front National under Marine Le Pen in France), and predicated on a zero sum between a welfare compact organized around an exclusive ethno-national form of social solidarity and the liberal commitment to the free movement of people linked to a globalizing acceptance of the free movement of capital. It may be that these countries manage to integrate new ethnic minority communities and develop an open, republican, cosmopolitan civic nationalism. It seems just as plausible that over the coming decades there will be a shift away from a solidaristic class politics of security and redistribution rooted in an easy and unreflective “imagined community” based on taken-for-granted and “common sense” understandings of German-ness or Swedish-ness. It is impossible to say with any certainty which, if either, scenario will play out in the context of rising popular resentment. This will all depend on the class and status group struggles over hegemony and moral and intellectual leadership which take place on the conjunctural terrain. Immigration has come to stand as a metonym, a condensation, of wider neo-liberal practices of deregulation and the social and economic uprooting and dislocation this has caused. It is in this conjuncture in which every-day struggles for resources to look after oneself, and for those closest to one, have intensified and increased strategies of ethno-national status distinction and socio-economic closure. In the extant hegemonic order, immigration offers a potent “frame” through which certain groups make practical sense of the declining control they have over their everyday lives. But what is certain is that conflicts between and within states over unequal material resources and recognition, between classes and various ethno-racial status groupings, generating both intended and unintended outcomes and effects, will continue to play themselves out on the basis of diverse strategies and power struggles. This is especially in the context of an absence of discussion concerning progressive national and international economic regulation centered on production for need rather than profit. Protagonists on all sides of these debates would do well to remember the complexity of the interplay between economics, politics, and culture and the fact that societal outcomes usually have only a tenuous relationship with political intentions. In this field, unintended consequences are, for better or for worse, very much the rule.

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